1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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177 tains to the north-east corner of Nyasa, and west on through Nyakyusa country to Lake Tanganyika.[1]

169 Despite the isolation of the Nyakyusa and their own fear of travelling in foreign chiefdoms, they were not inhospitable to these white strangers: Elton and all his party (some of whom were delayed by illness and travelled separately), and later Thomson, walked up the Nyakyusa valley in safety though it was 'teeming with armed warriors', who carried 'most cruel-looking spears'. Elton remarks that 'the people of Konde, though not unfriendly, are passively obstructive, and being in want of nothing are disinclined to render any services whatsoever to strangers'.[2] But Thomson appears to have been on the best of terms with the Nyakyusa he met. The Kukwe fled from their villages at Thomson's approach, but were usually persuaded to return.[3]

177 724 After these journeys of discovery, mission work and trade developed quickly. The African Lakes Corporation, a company formed to develop legitimate trade in Central Africa as a means of combating the slave trade, established a station at Karonga; and a road was surveyed from Karonga through to Lake Tanganyika.[4] Out-stations of the Livingstonia mission were set up at Chirenji (Mwini Wanda) in the hills north-west of Karonga, and at Kararamuka near Tukuyu.[5] Meantime, an Arab slaver, Mlozi, had settled in Ngonde, and a protracted struggle ensued between him and his Henga allies on the one side, and the people of Ngonde and the Europeans on the other, during which many Ngonde were enslaved or killed and their villages destroyed. Five thousand Nyakyusa spearmen came to the aid of the Europeans but, being more concerned with loot than with the defeat of the Arabs, they returned home with the goods they had taken instead of pursuing Mlozi and his men when they had the chance to do so.[6] Lord (then Captain) Lugard was for some months in command of the exiguous European force and its allies, and nearly

[1] Thomson, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 260–61.
[2] Elton, op. cit., p. 339.
[3] Thomson, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 282–9.
[4] Fotheringham, op. cit.; F. L. M. Moir, *After Livingstone* (1923).
[5] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between Lakes Nyasa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. VI, 1890, pp. 281–93.
[6] Fotheringham, op. cit., pp. 117–23.

I:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

is granted to a stranger by the villagers concerned, acting through their headman, not by the chief, who is usually informed, but seldom interferes. Only if a member of the chief's own family is moving within the chiefdom from one village to another, or if a very important stranger comes from outside, he may go to the chief and ask for a building plot, and the chief may then exercise his right of overlordship and grant the request. But this is a special and unusual case. It is villagers who grant land to an ordinary new-comer[1] and thereby accept him as one of themselves. His own wishes are taken into account whenever possible; if he sees a piece of ground which attracts him, and no one else has a claim to it, then it will be his.

We must emphasize the willingness with which strangers are received both by the villagers and the chief. Men are still scarcer than land in most places and the prestige and prosperity of villages and chiefdoms are increased by each addition to their membership. As we have said, part of the magical treatment at the 'coming out' is directly designed to attract followers to chiefs and village headmen. Strangers to a village are always given a house to sleep in while they are building their own and are usually given food as well, both formally by the chiefs and village headmen and informally by the neighbours. This formal giving of food has lapsed in Perukeo's chiefdom, which adjoins Rungwe mission, and to which very considerable immigration has taken place in the last forty years; there the relative scarcity of land is reflected in a decline of hospitality to new-comers, though none have yet been refused land. But the usual custom still is to receive them generously.

The granting of land to a new-comer is subject to the rights of a villager who has moved but may return. As we have seen, moves from one village to another are frequent, and unless a man has been expelled for witchcraft or some other serious crime his building site and gardens are kept for him, at least for a time. Anyone who occupies them does so on the understanding that he must vacate them should the former owner, or his heir, return. Further, a man who moves retains certain rights over bamboos, *amivungwi* and coffee-trees. The precise conditions under which individuals who have moved may reclaim their land have been discussed in *The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakyusa*.[2]

[1] cf. Godfrey Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 40. [2] pp. 36-40.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

low, again rising to a perfect fury of rapid sounds, not without a certain rhythm, but with rasping effect upon the nerves of Europeans tossing sleeplessly in the warm humid air.

After harvest comes the house-building; and when that is finished the men are free to go out to seek work. They usually set out in companies, for the Konde dislikes being alone on a journey. Like all home-loving people, they are suspicious of strangers, and if they have to pass through another tribe, they take great care to guard their small possessions; seldom more than they are wearing, and a spear or a club to guard them from the more obvious dangers of the way. There will be a few youths going out for the first time, with a wild flutter at the heart, of fear and expectancy. Fear, for they have heard strange tales of the white men and their ways; expectancy, *because of the wonderful things they will see*: the great houses, steamers, trains, motors; and what must seem countless white men to those who have been accustomed only to the missionary, the magistrate, and the storekeeper, and even these perhaps some days' journey from home. And who knows but he will come back with money in his pocket, wearing gorgeous raiment, a helmet perhaps, and, above all other things to be desired, a pair of boots! Those who stay long come back with the spoils of civilisation; highly coloured cloths, cheap clocks, melodeons, mouth-organs, worthless pocket-knives, which they deal out to admiring friends and acquaintances.

5 :Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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news, they are most anxious to prove to him that his tacit suspicions are unfounded, they wish to rid themselves of the *slur of witchcraft*. To invite him back is to express affection for him *and so* to demonstrate that he could not have been bewitched for, see, everyone likes him!

Such an invitation is often, but by no means always accepted. If the man refuses the first time then the villagers may or may not go again later to ask him back; but if he was an important member of the village—the great-commoner, a noted doctor, the son of an old family—the invitations may go on being repeated for years; and he will then almost certainly return in the end. Whether or not he accepts a particular invitation depends again largely upon his own health and that of his family and upon his relations with his new neighbours at the time it is made. Sickness and suspected witchcraft, or quarrels and insults in the new village will incline him to go home. And a man can always return, even without an invitation, unless he was originally expelled for being himself a witch.

I asked a young man of Selya whether of those who moved from their home chiefdoms the majority came back again or not. "The majority do come back, only a few stay permanently away. Some move for better food, the great majority because they fall sick and wish to recollect themselves in the tranquillity of another chiefdom—this is the main reason for moving; but they come back in the end. Whenever a man is slighted in the country to which he has gone, wherever he falls sick there—back he goes home! For when he is slighted he remembers that in his own country he belongs to an old family and that it is not as if he had moved under suspicion of being a witch, he only moved because he fell sick, and now he will return home. A man does not lose his affection for home, for there is his sacred grove, his fathers' graves. But the real reason for returning is that in every other place a man is less respected than at home, he is made light of; but in his own country he is known to belong to an old family and is treated with great respect, his neighbours call to mind the days when he and they herded cows together as boys and the fact that his father is buried among them. That is why people go home again."

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"And what of those who move to find better food?" I enquired.

"They come back too; if they are slighted in the place to which they have moved they come back home."

"For example there was a man who built here in the village of Igembe, he prospered greatly and his house was very long; we young men grew up to find him here and thought he was one of our own people, we had no idea that he belonged to Masoko. And then one day he was insulted, and immediately he moved and went home. He had lived with us for many, many years."

10:Gulliver K-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

land automatically reverted to the common pool. An established villager might decide to use part of it perhaps, but not before prudently gaining the approval of the headman, lest the migrant return later and accuse him of unlawful and unfriendly seizure. If the headman agreed, as he would after a time in most cases, the newly acquired plot became part of that villager's holding with as secure a title as the rest. Such vacated land could also be allocated by the headman to a newcomer or, before the sons' village was established, to the son of a villager.

If a man had more land than he could cultivate – because, for example, his sons had left him to cultivate in their own villages, or his wife had died – he was under no essential obligation to give up any part. The headman might, if the need arose, try to persuade him to release a portion in order to make it available to someone in need; but the land-holder could refuse and the headman had to accept his refusal. As a chief depended on the support of his headmen, so did a headman's position ultimately depend upon at least the passive support of his villagers, from whose ranks he was chosen.

At the next "coming-out" ceremony the men of a village of the old chiefdom might be required to move aside in order to allow the young men, their sons, to take up the better building sites and farming land. This they traditionally did voluntarily and they built new homesteads on one side and cleared new arable plots. Once re-established in this manner, these older men would not be disturbed again and they remained secure in their new holdings. How often in fact such a displacement took place I cannot say, but it certainly seems to have occurred sometimes, for one can still trace old village sites which appear to bear out the common Nyakyusa story.

In all this it must be remembered that the spirit of village unity and coevality was held in far higher esteem than land in such a fertile country where land was plentiful and subsistence farming required but small-sized holdings. Security of tenure and defined rights to particular plots are notions belonging to a different situation and age, when land begins to be scarce and to have an economic value, and when there is danger of men not being able to obtain as much as they need roughly where they need it.

Newcomers were invariably welcomed to a village: they were supplied with a house site and an arable holding and were assisted with food until the first harvest. They were an addition to the numerical size and physical strength of the village, and they increased a headman's prestige. Their rights were no less assured than those of founder-members of the village, although their social position was less secure, at least at first, for they had not shared in the history of the community and had not grown up with the ties of village association and comradeship amounting almost to kinship.

Traditional rights in trees may be mentioned briefly. Trees were inherited without difficulty along with the land on which they stood, and a brother or son would commonly inherit the deceased's valuable trees without bothering to take the arable land around. If a man left his village and thus forfeited his land there, the position was different. Banana trees went with the land and a new occupant simply took them over; bananas are of no great value as they grow so readily and ubiquitously. Bamboos are more valuable (being used extensively in house-building) and any left behind in this way could be claimed in the first instance not by the village but by the chief. If the chief wanted them they became his property, or he could grant them to any man he favoured. Usually a chief was content to leave them: then the local kinsmen of the departed man had first claim, and if they had no use for them, or if no kinsmen were resident in the village, they became village property to be allocated by the headman. *Uyungwil trees*[1] were regarded as

1. These are valued ... [illegible] ... of which I do not know.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 F367 Ngorodo F367
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number of separate plots per holding was less than where land was scarce; at the same time the average size of separate plots was smaller in these more land-hungry villages. The reader may refer to Table III (page 13) for some illustrative figures. Though differences are not yet very great, nevertheless there seems to be a fairly clear correlation between the average size of villagers' holdings on the one hand, and on the other the number and size of separate plots, and this is entirely borne out by my general information obtained in villages where actual measurements were not made. The inescapable conclusion must be that increasing scarcity of land in the Lake Plains leads to increasing fragmentation and dispersion of holdings; further, the present land situation and land tenure system can only lead to a continuation of this trend.

To emphasize the actual situation in 1955, let me reiterate the results of my own village surveys in the very high density region. In a village in Kasitu's chiefdom only a quarter of the younger men had paddy land of their own, holdings averaging about three-quarters of an acre; in a village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, only 17 per cent. of the younger men had paddy land and holdings averaged about half an acre (cf. Table VII, page 37). These two examples are taken from the areas of most severe land shortage and are not therefore altogether typical of the whole Lake Plains. Nevertheless, I do not think that they are entirely atypical; more importantly, they indicate the present trend. Within another generation this fragmentation and scarcity of holdings may well be the common feature everywhere in the flood plains unless the system of tenure and inheritance is modified. If the increase in population is quickened through improved medical facilities, better diet and housing, and improved conditions generally, then the position will become more acute. Such an increase is only to be expected. The Nyakyusa have decisively entered a money economy and they have learnt to seek higher standards of living. Only from their fields, by cash-cropping, can they expect to earn their livings and the demand for better living will not be curtailed – nor, of course, is it desirable that it should be.

There is another aspect of this whole matter which must be considered. It relates to the movement of individuals between villages. Such movement was, in earlier European days, a crucial factor in the age-village structure, for it was not only exceedingly frequent, but also it tended to undermine the idealized moral basis of village life. Movement between villages is increasingly difficult now, for a newcomer naturally cannot easily obtain land, nor as much land as he would desire even as a moderate demand. Nevertheless, the reasons for movement persist, and they will do so whilst the fear of witchcraft remains and whilst illness and misfortune are attributable to the unfavourable aura of a place. There remains also the tradition of moving so that a man may escape from bad relations with kinsfolk or neighbours, or from the obloquy resulting from his own disapproved actions. Much social and psychological tension is being created now as a result of the new difficulty of movement, and so far the Nyakyusa have not evolved alternative methods.

On the other hand, so deeply engrained is the notion of the prestige and power which accrues to a village by virtue of the number of its inhabitants, that headmen and villagers alike remain most reluctant to refuse to accept newcomers, even when it inevitably means that the present inhabitants must meet a further decrease in the average amount of land available per family, for a newcomer must be allocated a holding if he is to remain. Consequently, if a holding is for any reason left vacant, a headman tends to refuse to re-allocate some or all of it amongst his villagers and thus to augment their holdings; but instead he keeps it in reserve pending the hoped-for arrival of another newcomer. Men desiring to leave their own village try to get

area of such reserved land elsewhere. Each land is cultivated in the meantime on a kind of year-to-year lease by one or more of the villagers so allowed by the headman.

Even where no reserved plots exist a headman will still accept newcomers. If they are young men they must be prepared to go landless for the time being (i.e., to remain dependent on their father's fields elsewhere) until such time as land becomes vacant. If the newcomer is an older man, then the headman will try to persuade one or more of his villagers to give up portions of their holdings and he will allow some part of his own land. The newcomer is therefore often allocated small scrips and plots here and there in the village arable area and he thereafter joins the land-hungry crowd seeking to expand their holdings. In one village in which I worked where land shortage was critical (Kayogi, Kaswezi's chiefdom), there was not a single patch of arable land unworked; yet here the headman had, with full village approval, accepted three newcomers during the first nine months of 1955. Two of these were young men, one unmarried, and they could not expect to obtain land for some time except for a small banana plot. The third newcomer was a middle-aged man from a village some 12 miles away in another chiefdom. The headman had given him a half-acre plot out of his own paddy field and was laboriously begging pieces of land here and there from his people in order to make up a new holding of perhaps an acre. The headman himself had only about three and a half acres of arable land, he had at least one adult son who had not yet acquired an arable plot and he had other sons and brothers' sons owning only small fields. Yet he favoured this stranger, this newcomer. He was quite firm in his resolution to accept other newcomers in the future and in this he believed that he was acting as a good headman should. As far as I could learn he was supported by his villagers.

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This is not, by any means, an isolated or even unusual phenomenon. It is, I feel, important to bear in mind this illustration of contemporary affairs. Firstly, because it shows another way in which holdings are fragmented and dispersed; and secondly, because it demonstrates how, as indeed Nyakyusa have refused to face the situation of land shortage, and how they continue to follow traditional practices and values associated with village prestige. These people complain of their inability to obtain sufficient arable land, but they are not yet prepared to make the mental and social adjustments which might at least partly relieve their new predicament. On the other hand, they themselves understand the need for movement and perhaps they are right in their implied insistence not to discard their cultural ideals. Their resistance on accepting newcomers and their willingness (however dimly perceived and expressed) to share their land with the landless are not discreditable attitudes, even if they are economically unsuitable.

Security of Tenure and Disputes over Land

[541]

As already noted, under traditional land tenure a Nyakyusa had good security in his holding so long as he continued to live in the same village. The only alteration of tenure occurred on the "coming-out" ceremony of a new chief when the older sons would, if required, move aside in order to give their sons' generation the best land. This did not invariably happen in my case. Fundamentally, however, security of tenure is not a matter of great importance to a people who have plenty of land, and land which is more or less of the same quality. Indeed, convenience of location in respect of one's own homestead was almost the only value land had as such. Occasionally a more dominant chief might try to seize a commoner's field to allow of his own expanded cultivation; it was most unusual for him to succeed, and even if he did the dispossessed villager suffered little real deprivation, for he could easily obtain another field fairly near at hand.

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247 and Waplke, although very little of these is sold. Ploughs have been introduced into the area as it is flat and the total number in use in 1942 is about 400. The first ploughing is carried out in June or July when the ground is still wet, and the second ploughing in October to February. Planting, which is all broadcast, is carried out in November to the middle of March and the harvesting is done in May to September.

248 A first mill was erected at Iyrene on the lake shore in 1942 with a capacity of 5 tons of rice in 17 hours. Another is now on its way from India with a capacity of 10 tons of rice in 17 hours and should be erected some time in 1944.

249 A small acreage of cotton is also sown along the Songwe River boundary, which borders on Nyasaland, with seed obtained from that Colony. Conditions, however, are not suitable on the remainder of the lake shore and cultivation is not encouraged.

250 251 A list of exports from the district with approximate weights for 1942 is appended:—

Article	Weight in lbs.
[illegible]	[illegible]
Total	[illegible]

Land Tenure and Economics of the People

252 In theory all land belongs to the chiefs or sub-chiefs, but in practice once a man has cultivated a plot, that plot belongs to him until he leaves the area to which he lives. If he leaves, the land reverts to the chief or sub-chief and may be given by him through his headman or elder to anyone in the area who is short of land or to a newcomer who wants a plot. Should a man go away and return after a long period and ask for a plot, he is bound to be given one but not necessarily the plot he had before he left. Newcomers are welcomed and are given land, as the amount of tax collected in an area is an indication of the importance of a chief.

253 254 255

256 Stock grazing is a problem which is coming more and more to the fore. The number of